

Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, and the threat of greater risk from the COVID-19 virus



Type 1 diabetes

Type 1 diabetes is a chronic condition in which the immune system destroys insulin-making beta cells in the pancreas. As a result, the pancreas does not produce insulin and the body is unable to process glucose.

In Type 1 diabetes people are mostly found to be predisposed to it genetically, but there also have been instances where the disease has been caused by environmental factors or even viral infections. White people are considered to be more prone to have this type of diabetes, as also, people living in colder regions of the Northern Hemisphere. However, the exact factors that act as a trigger for type 1 diabetes are not yet fully understood.

Type 2 diabetes

Type 2 diabetes, also referred to as diabetes mellitus or adult-onset diabetes is a chronic disease that occurs after middle age sets in. In patients with this type of diabetes, Insulin that is created in the pancreas is not used by the body in the manner that it should be. Since insulin which regulates the blood sugar levels is not being used effectively, people with Type 2 diabetes have very high sugar levels in the blood. This leads to further complications such as kidney disease, poor vision, poor blood circulation, immune system problems and issues with the nervous system. It also raises the risk of a heart attack or stroke.

In the past 20 years, diabetes mellitus has become prevalent among children and teenagers as well, primarily because of obesity that results from unhealthy food habits and inadequate physical activity.

Over time, both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes result in similar complications, but Type 1 diabetics could also develop hypoglycemia and diabetic ketoacidosis.

India's score on diabetes

According to a report from International Diabetes Federation (IDF), more than 74 million people living in India are diabetic. According to the report, this number is the second highest in the world. It does not include the 40 million adults in India who have impaired glucose tolerance (IGT), making them a high-risk category as far as developing Type 2 diabetes is concerned. The IDF report published in Dec 2021 also found that more than half (53.1%) of people living with diabetes in India have not yet been diagnosed.

Diabetes and Covid-19

Studies in India and abroad are linking the ongoing Covid-19 as a trigger for increasing people's risk of developing diabetes. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that the virus damages fat cells and alters their function. These functional changes may contribute to the onset of diabetes in some people.